

April 16, 2020

St. Louis County Department of Public Health COVID-19 Update

Process After a COVID-19 Related Death

COVID-19 is impacting a many industries, including those who provide care to loved ones after death. Funeral directors, embalmers, medical examiners, and others are striving to understand the impact COVID-19 will have on their methods and safety. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) notes COVID-19 is a new disease and the medical community is still trying to learn and understand how it spreads.

It is widely believed the virus primarily spreads through respiratory droplets inhaled into the lungs, which is not a concern after death. However, it is also possible a person can contract COVID-19 by touching an object with the virus on it and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. This is not believed to be the primary source of transmission, but does remain a concern. As such, individuals should take this into consideration before touching the body of someone who has died.

Scientists and researchers have yet to determine how long the virus remains active in the body after death. The CDC encourages funeral home staff to maintain their routine infection prevention and control precautions using standard personal protective equipment. After such procedures, standard cleaning and disinfecting procedures should be followed.

There are many customs that are of significant religious and cultural importance after a death. Every effort is being made to enable the deceased's loved ones to participate in the rituals and traditions that are most important to them. St. Louis County has been working with a variety faith leaders to discuss how these traditions can be upheld during a time of a global pandemic. Families should consult with their spiritual leaders and funeral home staff regarding the best practices for proceeding safely.

Impersonation of Officials

Around the country, there have been various reports of people impersonating government officials related to the COVID-19 situation. Some reports involve people confronting others claiming to be representatives of government agencies like FEMA, DHS, or other health officials. These individuals are confronting people they claim are violating stay-at-home orders and demanding payment or harassing them. Other reports involve people impersonating law enforcement and conducting traffic stops on vehicles for similar purposes. Still other situations have involved the use of counterfeit or otherwise fraudulent decals, license plates, or placards on vehicles claiming affiliation with a government agency or "essential" industry organization.

The St. Louis County Department of Public Health (DPH) is not contacting those that may violate executive orders at this time. DPH, and other government agencies, will not ask for payment

information or information that is unrelated to your current health status over the phone or by other electronic methods.

We recommend the following action:

- Contact 911 immediately if you believe you have been contacted by someone that is not a law enforcement officer or government official.
- Do not respond to calls or texts from unknown or suspicious numbers.
- Never share your personal and/or financial information via email, text messages, or over the phone.
- Be overly cautious if you are being pressured to share any information or make a payment immediately.
- Remember that government agencies will never call you to ask for personal information or money. Scammers often “spoof” phone numbers to trick you into answering or taking action.
- Do not click on suspicious links online or through text message.
- Always ensure a charity is legitimate before donating.

Please contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via email at disaster@leo.gov or your local law enforcement agency if you feel you have been a victim of a scam or fraud.

Contact Information

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services hotline can be reached at (877)435-8411.

St. Louis County has created a website dedicated to the dissemination of information relating to COVID-19, www.stlcorona.com. Please visit that website or those belonging to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) or the World Health Organization (WHO) for the most current and reputable information.



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